Please add claims 25 and 26 as follows:

--25. A method according to claim 1, wherein the previously predicted values and the currently predicted values for each of plural predictor variables are based on forecasts from a plurality of different individuals.

26. A method according to claim 15, wherein the previously predicted values and the currently predicted values for each of plural predictor variables are based on forecasts from a plurality of different individuals.--

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 26 are now pending in the application, with claims 1, 15, 23 and 24 being the independent claims. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, objection was made to Figures 1 to 3 for containing matter that is not appropriate for drawings. In response, Applicants are submitting the accompanying Request for Approval of Drawing Changes. In view of this submission, withdrawal of the drawing objection is respectfully requested. In making the requested drawing changes, only text from the "Description of the Related Art" section of the

Specification was copied into Figures 1 to 3; accordingly, no new matter has been added.

Objection also was made to the "Summary of the Invention" section of the Specification. In response, Applicants have moved all descriptive matter that is not directly related to the presently claimed invention into the main body of the Specification. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 8 to 12 and 18 to 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. In response, Applicants have amended those claims above, paying particular attention to the points raised by the Examiner. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 4, 6 to 8, 10 to 18, and 20 to 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent 5,812,988 (Sandretto); claim 5 was rejected under § 103(a) over Sandretto in view of U.S. Patent 5,761,442 (Barr); and claims 9 and 19 were rejected under § 103(a) over Sandretto in view of allegedly admitted prior art. Withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested for the following reasons.

The present invention generally concerns prediction of a target variable by creating a forecasting model based on a best fit of previously predicted values for plural "predictor variables" to historical values for a target variable and then using the forecasting model, together with currently predicted values for at least some of the

predictor variables, to predict a value of the target variable, where the predictor variables are different than the target variable.

Thus, for example, assume that the predictor variables are the unemployment rate, the gross national product, and the inflation rate, and the target variable is the market price for a share of Microsoft common stock. Then, parameters of a forecasting model may be assigned, for example, by using stepwise linear regression to obtain a best fit of values predicted for the predictor variables on the first of each month in year 2001 to historical values of the share price for Microsoft common stock of the 15th of each month in year 2001. Once the forecasting model parameters have been defined in this manner, the forecasting model can be used to predict the future values of the Microsoft common stock share price. For example, predictions for the three predictor variables made on May 1, 2002, might be plugged into the forecasting model to obtain a prediction for the share price of Microsoft common stock on May 15, 2002.

The creation of a forecasting model based on a comparison of predictions for a group of variables to historical values for a different target variable and then use of predictions for at least some of the prediction variables to predict the target variables has been found to provide better accuracy than can be achieved with many conventional forecasting models. In this regard, such conventional forecasting models, to the extent that they use other variables in connection with the prediction of a target variable, tend to use historical values for such other variables, either in the generation

of the forecasting model or in the use of the forecasting model to predict a future values for the target variable. On the other hand, the present invention's use of predictions for the predictor variables both in the generation of the forecasting model and in the use of such forecasting model to predict a future value for the target variable often can pick up and incorporate information that is not available when only historical values are utilized.

For example, when the predictor value predictions are made by a large group of individual people, those predicted values often will incorporate attitudes of the population that may affect future changes in the economy. Moreover, because such predictions relate to variables that are different than the target variable, such predictions often will have fewer biases than direct predictions of the target variable. For instance, some portion of the population (e.g., shareholders) might have a vested interest in the movement of the share price of the Microsoft common stock, while generally being free of any particular bias regarding inflation rates, gross national product or unemployment rates. As indicated above, use of such predictions of the predictor variables often can result in better predictions of the target variable.

Thus, independent claims 1 and 23 are directed to predicting a value of a target variable based on predictions of other variables. Historical values for the target variable are obtained at each of plural time points and both previously predicted values and currently predicted values for each of plural predictor variables are obtained, with

the plural predictor variables being different from the target variable. Values are then assigned to parameters of a forecasting model to obtain a best fit of the previously predicted values for the plural predictor variables to the historical values for the target variable. Using such forecasting model and assigned values, a predicted value for the target variable is then generated from the currently predicted values for at least a subset of the plural predictor variables.

The foregoing combination of features is not disclosed or suggested by the applied art. In particular, the applied art does not disclose or suggest at least the features of assigning values to parameters of a forecasting model to obtain a best fit of previously predicted values for plural predictor variables to historical values for a target variable and then using the forecasting model and assigned values to generate a predicted value for the target variable from currently predicted values for at least a subset of the plural predictor variables, where the plural predictor variables are different from the target variable.

In this regard, Sandretto concerns a technique for determining the net present values and risks for a group of assets. Specifically, Sandretto's technique utilizes an iterative process to estimate each asset's risk. See column 8, line 60 to column 11, line 55, which is summarized from column 8, line 60 to column 9, line 19. More specifically, Sandretto's process begins by estimating an initial set of financial statements and cash flows for each asset in a group. Then, additional sets of cash flows are estimated using

different economic variable estimates. Net present values are then determined based on expected inflation and a risk measurement for each asset. Returns are then calculated for each asset and simulated index returns are calculated for the assets as a group. The simulated returns for each asset are regressed against the simulated index returns in order to estimate an updated risk measure for each asset. Using these updated risk measures, Sandretto's previous steps are repeated, with this process continuing until risk measures for the assets stabilize.

While the Office Action asserts that Sandretto discloses or at least suggests the above-referenced features of the invention, Applicants are unable to find those features in Sandretto. The only portion of Sandretto cited in the Office Action as showing such features is column 4, line 60 to column 5, line 19. However, that portion of Sandretto merely discusses the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM) which, according to Sandretto, simply involves: determining monthly returns for a particular asset, determining monthly returns for a stock index, and regressing the individual asset returns against the market returns in order to obtain a risk measure for the asset, which can then be used to estimate the rate at which future cash flows from the asset will be discounted. This, however, has nothing whatsoever to do with utilizing previously predicted values for predictor variables in order to create a forecasting model and then using the forecasting model to predict a value for a target variable (which is different than the predictor variables) from currently predicted values for at least a subset of the

predictor variables. To the contrary, as described in Sandretto, CAPM only utilizes historical values in order to estimate a present value of an asset.

Nothing else in Sandretto is seen to disclose or to suggest this feature of the invention. Rather, the remainder of Sandretto is only understood to concern the iterative improvement to CAPM that has be summarized above. None of the other applied art remedies this deficiency, and the Office Action has not even alleged that it does so.

Lacking these features of the present invention, Sandretto's techniques generally will not be able to achieve the advantages of the present invention which are described above. Accordingly, independent claims 1 and 23 are believed to be allowable over the applied art.

Independent claims 15 and 24 are directed to predicting a value of a target variable based on predictions of other variables. Historical values for the target variable are obtained at each of plural time points, and previously predicted values and currently predicted values for each of plural predictor variables are obtained, with the plural predictor variables being different from the target variable. A subset of the plural predictor variables whose previously predicted values provide a best fit to the historical values for the target variable are then identified by using stepwise linear regression. Using weighting coefficients from the stepwise linear regression, a predicted value for

the target variable is generated from the currently predicted values for the identified subset of the plural predictor variables.

The foregoing combination of features is not disclosed or suggested by the applied art. In particular, the applied art does not disclose or suggest at least the features of identifying a subset of plural predictor variables whose previously predicted values provide a best fit to the historical values for a target variable by using stepwise linear regression and then generating a predicted value for the target variable from currently predicted values for an identified subset of the plural predictive variables, using weighting coefficients obtained from the stepwise linear regression.

As noted above, the applied art does not even disclose or suggest the use of previously predicted values for predictor variables to obtain a forecasting model and then use of currently predicted values for at least some of the predictor variables in connection with the forecasting model to generate a predicted value for a target variable that is different than the predictor variables. Accordingly, the prior art could not possibly have suggested the above-referenced features of independent claims 15 and 24. Accordingly, claims 15 and 24 are believed to be allowable over the applied art.

The other claims in the application depend from the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons. Because each such dependent claim recites at least one additional feature of

the present invention, the individual reconsideration of each on its own merits, in view of the above remarks, is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and an indication to that effect is respectfully requested.

If there are any fees due in connection with the filing of this paper that have not been accounted for in this paper or the accompanying papers, please charge the fees to our Deposit Account No. 13-3735. If an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is required for the filing of this paper and is not accounted for in this paper or the accompanying papers, such an extension is requested and the fee (or any underpayment thereof) should also be charged to our Deposit Account. A duplicate copy of this page is enclosed for that purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

MITCHELL, SILBERBERG & KNUPP LLP

Dated: May 28, 2002

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APPENDIX A

Specification Marked to Indicate Changes

Matter to be inserted at Page 82, line 15:

Summary of Related Concepts:

Forecasting Contest

The present invention provides forecasting contests that include features directed to better ranking of the participants and/or that result in a better database of prediction data.

Thus, in one aspect, the invention is directed to conducting a contest that produces forecasting data for predesignated variables whose values change over time. Initially, participant registrations are accepted, and the participants are permitted to submit predictions of values, projected at plural different time points, for at least one of several predesignated variables. For example, an individual participant might elect to predict what the exchange rate between the U.S. Dollar and the Japanese Yen will be at the end of next week and at the end of the year. Then, the participants receive an overall ranking based on their relative accuracies (e.g., percentile rankings) in individual prediction events.

By ranking individuals based on their relative accuracies in individual prediction events, a contest conducted according to this aspect of the invention permits an overall

ranking within a group of participants even though the participants in the group might be predicting different combinations of variables or might be predicting for different time horizons. At the same time, ranking based on performance in a number of different prediction events often can provide more meaningful rankings, for example, by eliminating many of the incentives to engage in strategies that may occasionally provide high rankings in individual prediction events. For instance, in conventional contests that rank based on accuracy in individual prediction events and recognition is given only to the top performers, a participant might have a strategic incentive to predict relatively unlikely values rather than values that he actually expects to occur so that occasionally he will be correct and will be listed as a top forecaster, rather than always ranking near the middle.

In another aspect, the invention is directed to conducting a contest that produces forecasting data for predesignated variables whose values change over time. Participant registrations are accepted, but in this aspect of the invention registration by a participant requires providing information regarding demographic characteristics of the participant. Participants are then permitted to submit predictions of values, projected at plural different time points, for at least one of certain predesignated variables. Finally, the participants are ranked based on their track records over a predefined period of time. In this aspect of the invention, the predesignated variables

include economic and/or financial variables, and participants are rewarded for updating their predictions as early as possible.

By requiring demographic information as a condition to registration, this aspect of the invention can often create a more useful database of prediction data for purposes such as combination forecasting. Also, rewarding participants for updating their predictions as early as possible can provide a fuller, more complete and more continuous database. Finally, as noted above, by ranking based on track record over a pre-determined period of time, single-event strategies often can be largely eliminated.

In another aspect, the invention is directed to conducting a contest that produces forecasting data for predesignated variables whose values change over time. Participant registrations are accepted, with participant registration including providing information regarding personal characteristics of the participant. The participants are permitted to submit predictions of values, projected at plural different time points, for at least one of certain predesignated variables, including economic and/or financial variables. Then, the participants are ranked based on their track records over a predefined period of time. This ranking includes: (1) determining, for each participant and for each of plural prediction events in which the participant competed, a percentile rank in comparison to other participants who competed in the prediction event; (2) combining the percentile ranks for each participant to produce a raw score for the

participant; and (3) ranking the participants based on the raw score for each participant.

The ranking technique utilized in this aspect of the invention can be systematic and automatically implemented, while maintaining the above-described advantages of providing an overall ranking based on relative accuracies in individual prediction events.

In a still further aspect, the invention is directed to conducting a contest that produces forecasting data for predesignated variables whose values change over time. Participant registrations are accepted, and the participants are permitted to submit predictions of values, projected at plural different time points, for at least one of certain predesignated variables. The participants then receive an overall ranking based on their track record over a pre-defined period of time and based on consistency of their accuracies in individual prediction events.

By basing overall ranking on accuracy consistency in individual prediction events, as well as on track record, this aspect of the invention can often provide better ranking information than conventional ranking techniques permit. For example, in the investment arena an important quality in judging the merit of an investment advisor will often be consistency, as inconsistency typically translates directly into higher risk. Thus, by ranking based on a combination of accuracy and consistency, this aspect of

the present invention can often provide a ranking that is typically more meaningful to third parties, such as investors.

In a still further aspect, the invention is directed to conducting a contest that produces forecasting data for predesignated variables whose values change over time. Participant registrations are accepted, and the participants are permitted to submit predictions in plural different prediction events, each prediction event having a closing time point by which final predictions must be submitted. Then, an overall ranking of the participants is determined based on the participants' track records in the prediction events over a pre-defined period of time and based on how soon their final predictions were made before the closing time points.

By basing the overall ranking on how soon the participants' final predictions were made before certain closing time points, as described above, this aspect of the invention often encourages earlier predictions and more frequent prediction updates, thereby providing a more complete database of prediction data. At the same time, participants are rewarded for discovering and/or incorporating new information into their predictions at the earliest possible time, with the result that the both quality of the prediction data and the quality of the rankings are likely enhanced.

In a still further aspect, the invention is directed to conducting a contest that produces forecasting data for predesignated variables whose values change over time. Participant registrations are accepted, and the participants are permitted to submit

predictions of values, projected at plural different time points, for at least one of certain predesignated variables. The participants also are permitted to submit estimates of their own uncertainty regarding their predictions.

By permitting participants to submit estimates of their own prediction uncertainty in the foregoing manner, participants often are encouraged to participate more frequently, even if they are somewhat less certain regarding their predictions. As a result, more data are collected. At the same time, the additional uncertainty data enhances the prediction data database, thus frequently permitting more accurate combination forecasts, more accurate determination of other statistical indicators, and even creation of additional statistical measures, all toward the end of more accurately gauging the sentiments of the forecasting panel.

Prediction Input

The invention also addresses the above-mentioned problems in the prior art by permitting users to enter predictions graphically.

Thus, in one aspect the invention is directed to facilitating the entry of prediction data. Initially, a graph is electronically displayed, the graph including a historical portion that includes historical values of the variable over time and also including a future portion. Then, a participant is permitted to designate a point on the future portion of the graph (e.g., by using an input device such as a mouse, a touch-sensitive

display screen or the like) and the designated point is converted into a predicted value for the variable at a realization time.

In another aspect, the invention is directed to a method for entering prediction data for a variable. Initially, a participant causes a graph to be electronically displayed, the graph including a historical portion that includes historical values of the variable over time and also including a future portion. Next, the participant designates a point on the future portion of the graph, the position of the point corresponding to the predicted value for the variable at a particular realization time and also corresponding to the realization time itself. For instance, the horizontal position of the point might correspond to the realization time while the vertical position of the point corresponds to the predicted value. Finally, the participant enters the predicted value, such as by clicking on an "enter" button.

By allowing a participant to see a graphical depiction of historical values for a prediction variable and then to enter a prediction value for the variable in the foregoing manner, the present invention can offer a more intuitive way to enter prediction values than has been available in the prior art techniques. In addition, the foregoing technique can permit a participant to observe and evaluate a significant amount of information at the same time that he is entering his prediction.

Additional features of the invention include: also displaying on the same graph historical values for other variables; providing the ability to display the historical data

and/or the predicted value for the prediction variable with respect to a different independent variable than in the initial graph; displaying multiple variables on an initial graph in a first view (e.g., a time series view) and then permitting the participant to obtain a view that is a rotation of the first view (e.g., a cross-maturity comparison view); permitting the participant to numerically alter the prediction after it has been entered graphically; permitting the participant to alternatively bypass the graphical input altogether and instead enter the prediction numerically; permitting the participant to enter, in addition to his prediction, an estimate of his own uncertainty regarding his prediction; permitting the participant to graph only certain ranges specified by the participant; permitting the participant to change scales of the graph; permitting the participant to obtain graphs of arbitrarily requested mathematical transformations of historical and/or prediction data; permitting the participant to alter his predictions based on any of the foregoing different views, and even from within any or all of the different views; linking historical and/or current data, news, publications, etc. to the cursor position as it moves across the graph, so that such information is easily and conveniently available to the participant; and, lastly, matching the participant's prediction(s) to different prediction models to find the closest model, and thereafter providing the participant with information regarding the model, such as the type of model, the implied assumptions in the participant's prediction(s), and the amount of

weight the participant is implicitly applying to different items or pieces of information that underlie the identified forecasting model.

Any or all of the foregoing features can be included in the prediction input techniques of the present invention. All enhance the basic prediction input technique described above by providing the participant with a wide variety of different types of data in any of a wide variety of different formats, thus permitting each individual participant to obtain the data that are most useful to him and to display such data in the format(s) that are most useful to him.

Community-Selected Content

The present invention also addresses the above-described problems of providing the most useful content over an electronic network, such as the Internet. Generally speaking this problem is addressed in the present invention by providing a systematic technique for allowing users to participate in determining what content is most useful to them.

Thus, according to one aspect, the invention maintains a collection of resources that can be accessed by a participant over the electronic network (such as the Internet) at a given time and, typically upon request, provides such resources to the participant over the electronic network . Points are assigned to each resource based on participant access of the resource and the collection is modified based on the points

assigned to each resource. For instance, a fixed number of points may be assigned to each resource when a participant accesses the resource and the resources having the worst overall rating based on assigned points may be removed from the collection. Alternatively, a resource may be moved from the initial collection and placed in a second collection when its number of points has reached a certain predetermined criterion (e.g., a fixed number or a fixed number within a set period of time).

By assigning points and modifying the collection in the foregoing manner, the present invention can provide a systematic and automatic technique for updating a collection of resources over an electronic network, such as the Internet. In a more particularized aspect of the invention, the number of points assigned to a resource when a participant accesses the resource is based upon the participation level of the participant. In this way, the participants who are most active on the network can have the greatest impact on the resource collection.

In another particularized aspect of the invention, each resource is assigned a score based on the points assigned to the resource, with points assigned more recently being weighted more heavily in determining the score than points assigned less recently. In this way, it can be possible to properly maintain the collection even in the presence of changing tastes or changing consumer needs.

In a further aspect, the invention is directed to providing information to participants over an electronic network by maintaining a collection of resources.

Participants are permitted to rate the resources and points are assigned to each resource based on participant rating of the resource. The collection of resources is then modified based on assigned points for each resource.

In the foregoing manner, participants have the ability to directly assess the usefulness of any particular resource to them and these assessments are utilized to modify the collection. This can have the effect of making the resource collection even more responsive to the needs of the participants (or users) because, although a resource might initially appear to be valuable, upon closer inspection a user might find it to be inaccurate, poorly organized or lacking for any other reason. Thus, allowing participant ratings and the utilization of those ratings in the foregoing manner often will account for such problems.

In a still further aspect, the invention is directed to providing information to participants over an electronic network by maintaining a collection of resources. Participants are permitted to both access and rate the resources, with points assigned to each resource based on such ratings and access. The collection of resources is then modified based on total points for each resource.

By combining point assignments based on both ratings and access, this aspect of the invention often typically can provide all of the benefits described above.

Combination Forecasting Using Clusterization

The present invention addresses the problems with attempting to use combination forecasting in certain cases (such as where membership of the forecasting panel is inconsistent) by using clusterization techniques.

Thus, in one aspect, the invention is directed to providing combination forecasts using predictions obtained from a group of forecasters. The forecasters are first divided into a number of pre-defined clusters, which typically will have been formed using statistical clustering techniques. In particular, clusters of forecasters can be formed based on similarities of the forecasters' predictions. Then, statistical data are calculated for each pre-defined cluster (e.g., measures of central tendency and dispersion). Finally, the statistical data for all the pre-defined clusters are combined so as to obtain a combination forecast.

By utilizing clustering in the foregoing manner, the present invention often can avoid the difficulties of inconsistent forecaster participation. For instance, by utilizing cluster statistics, it often will much less significant whether or not any particular individual submits a forecast for a given prediction event.

The foregoing steps can be repeated for each new prediction event. For example, after an initial clustering with respect to a given prediction variable, each time it is desired to generate a new combination forecast for that prediction variable, the

currently participating forecasters can be simply assigned to their previously identified clusters and then new cluster statistics can be determined and combined.

When generating the combination forecast, it is generally preferable to weight the central tendency for each cluster based on its dispersion measure (e.g., more tightly clustered predictions given more weight than less tightly clustered predictions) and/or based on the cluster's previous prediction accuracy (e.g., clusters having historically better prediction accuracies are given more weight).

It is also preferable to periodically re-cluster the forecasters to obtain a new set of pre-defined clusters. This often will be desirable to take account of shifting demographics, attitudes, social climates, economic conditions, and similar matters.

More particularized aspects of the invention also include identifying an assignment formula for assigning each new forecaster to a pre-defined cluster based on personal characteristics of the new forecaster. This feature of the invention can permit additions of new forecasters in between re-clusterizations.

Pricing Derivative Instruments

The present invention also provides a novel technique for pricing derivative instruments by using forecast data.

Thus, in one aspect, the present invention is directed to pricing a derivative instrument whose value is dependent upon the value of an underlying asset at a future

date. For each of a number of predetermined different prices, the value of a derivative instrument is calculated if the underlying asset were to be priced at that price on a future date. A number of individual forecasts of the value of the underlying asset on the future date are obtained. A probability is determined for each price, from the number of predetermined different prices of the underlying asset, as the proportion of individual forecasts that were closer to that price than to any other of the predetermined different prices. Finally, the derivative instrument is priced based on the values calculated for the derivative instrument above and based on the probabilities determined above. Preferably, the derivative instrument is priced as the sum, over the number of predetermined different prices, of the value identified above for the derivative instrument if the underlying asset were priced at a given price on the future date, times the probability determined above for that given price.

By virtue of the foregoing technique, a price can be determined for a derivative instrument, often without the need to assume a particular shape of the probability density function for the value of the underlying asset and without having to rely on historical variances, which are often poor indicators of future variances.

The foregoing technique can also be repeated for multiple time points within the period during which rights under the derivative instrument may be exercised. The resulting multiple different prices can then be combined, such as by taking a maximum

of such prices, or in various other manners, to determine a final price for the derivative instrument.

Utilization of Banner Ad Click-Through Information

The present invention provides the following novel techniques for utilizing banner ad click-through information to predict values of variables and to manage the display of banner ads.

In one aspect, the invention is directed to forecasting values for a variable by obtaining click-through data (e.g., click-through rates or changes in click-through rates) for website banner advertisements. Initially, a forecasting model is created for a variable (e.g., using a regression technique to create a linear or non-linear forecasting model), based on correlations of historical values of the click-through data with historical values of the variable. Then, the forecasting model is used to predict a future value of the variable.

In the foregoing manner, click-through data can often be used to predict a variable. For example, it may be possible to more accurately predict new housing starts in part based on the click-through rate for a particular mortgage advertisement.

In more particularized aspects of the invention, the website banner advertisements may be sorted into groups by categorizing them according to product/service advertised. Utilizing statistics for each such group may provide

continuity while at the same time lessening the effects of changing advertisements. Thus, for example, new housing starts may be predicted based on the click-through rates for all mortgage advertisements.

In a further aspect, the invention is directed to displaying website banner advertisements. The displayed website banner advertisements are sorted into categories based on product/service sold. An individual click-through rate is determined for each website banner advertisement and an aggregate click-through rate is determined for each category. Then, which website banner advertisements are displayed is changed based on a comparison between information pertaining to the individual click-through rate for a selected website banner advertisement and information pertaining to the aggregate click-through rate for the category to which the selected website banner advertisement belongs.

The foregoing technique often can permit the display of more effective website banner advertisements. For example, if the click-through rate for a particular mortgage advertisement is significantly less than the click-through rate for all mortgage advertisements, that particular mortgage advertisement may need to be modified or replaced.

APPENDIX A

Claims Marked to Indicate Changes

1. (Amended) A method for predicting a value of a target variable based on predictions of other variables, said method comprising:

obtaining historical values for the target variable at each of plural time points;

obtaining previously predicted values and currently predicted values for each of plural predictor variables, the plural predictor variables being different from the target variable;

assigning values to parameters of a forecasting model to obtain a best fit of the previously predicted values for the plural predictor variables to the historical values for the target variable; and

[predicting a]generating a predicted value [of] for the target variable from the currently predicted values for at least a subset of the plural predictor variables using the forecasting model and the values assigned to the parameters of the forecasting model.

8. (Amended) A method according to Claim 1, further comprising a step of finding a difference between the predicted value [of] for the target variable and a second predicted [in said predicting step and a] value [predicted] for the target variable

[in an other manner] which is predicted using a second technique that is different than said predicting step, so as to obtain an estimate of information that is specific to the target variable.

9. (Amended) A method according to Claim 8, wherein the [other manner] second technique is a combination forecast of the value of the target variable.

10. (Amended) A method according to Claim 8, further comprising a step of using the estimate of information that is specific to the target variable to predict an effect of [similar] a same type of information on a second variable that is [similar to] different than the target variable.

11. (Amended) A method according to Claim 1, further comprising a step of finding a difference between the predicted value of the target variable [predicted in said predicting step] and an actual value realized for the target variable[, so as to obtain a measure of information that is specific to the target variable].

12. (Amended) A method according to Claim 11, further comprising a step of using the [measure of information that is specific to] difference between the predicted value of the target variable and the actual value realized for the target variable to

predict an effect of [similar] a same type of information on a second variable that is [similar to] different than the target variable.

15. (Amended) A method for predicting a value of a target variable based on predictions of other variables, said method comprising:

obtaining historical values for the target variable at each of plural time points;

obtaining previously predicted values and currently predicted values for each of plural predictor variables, the plural predictor variables being different from the target variable;

identifying a subset of the plural predictor variables whose previously predicted values provide a best fit to the historical values for the target variable, by using stepwise linear regression; and

[predicting a]generating a predicted value [of] for the target variable from the currently predicted values for the subset of the plural predictor variables identified in said identifying step using weighting coefficients obtained from the stepwise linear regression.

18. (Amended) A method according to Claim 15, further comprising a step of finding a difference between the predicted value [of] for the target variable and a second predicted [in said predicting step and a] value [predicted] for the target variable

[in an other manner] that has been predicted using a second technique that is different than said predicting step, so as to obtain an estimate of information that is specific to the target variable.

19. (Amended) A method according to Claim 18, wherein the [other manner] second technique is a combination forecast of the value of the target variable.

20. (Amended) A method according to Claim 18, further comprising a step of using the estimate of information that is specific to the target variable to predict an effect of [similar] a same type of information on a second variable that is [similar to] different than the target variable.

21. (Amended) A method according to Claim 15, further comprising a step of finding a difference between the predicted value [of] for the target variable [predicted in said predicting step] and an actual value realized for the target variable[, so as to obtain a measure of information that is specific to the target variable].

22. (Amended) A method according to Claim 21, further comprising a step of using the [measure of information that is specific to] difference between the predicted value for the target variable and the actual value realized for the target variable to

predict an effect of [similar] a same type information on a second variable that is [similar to] different than the target variable.

23. (Amended) A computer-readable medium [storing] encoded with computer-executable [process steps, said] process steps for predicting a value of a target variable based on predictions of other variables, wherein said computer-executable process steps [comprising] include steps to:

obtain historical values for the target variable at each of plural time points;

obtain previously predicted values and currently predicted values for each of plural predictor variables, the plural predictor variables being different from the target variable;

assign values to parameters of a forecasting model to obtain a best fit of the previously predicted values for the plural predictor variables to the historical values for the target variable; and

[predict a] generate a predicted value [of] for the target variable from the currently predicted values for at least a subset of the plural predictor variables using the forecasting model and the values assigned to the parameters of the forecasting model.

24. (Amended) An apparatus for predicting a value of a target variable based on predictions of other variables, said apparatus comprising:

a processor for executing stored program instruction steps; and

a memory connected to the processor for storing the program instruction steps, wherein the program instruction steps include steps to:

(a) obtain historical values for the target variable at each of plural time points;

(b) obtain previously predicted values and currently predicted values for each of plural predictor variables, the plural predictor variables being different from the target variable;

(c) assign values to parameters of a forecasting model to obtain a best fit of the previously predicted values for the plural predictor variables to the historical values for the target variable; and

(d) [predict a]<u>generate a predicted</u> value [of] <u>for</u> the target variable from the currently predicted values for at least a subset of the plural predictor variables using the forecasting model and the values assigned to the parameters of the forecasting model.